

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as currently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-13, 17, and 18 are currently pending. The present amendment amends Claim 18 and cancels Claims 14-16 and 19 without prejudice or disclaimer. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Steiner et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,748,828, herein "Steiner"); Claim 15 was objected to but noted as allowable if rewritten in independent form; and Claims 1-13 were allowed. Applicant appreciatively acknowledges the indication of allowable subject matter in the claims.

In response to the objection to Claim 15, independent Claim 18 is amended to incorporate the features of allowable Claim 15 which is cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 18 and dependent Claim 17 are now allowable. Further, withdrawn Claims 14 and 19 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Finally, Applicant notes that form PTO 1449 is only partially acknowledged. Applicant respectfully requests formal acknowledgment of the consideration of foreign patent document WO98/19105 filed on May 7, 1998, in a future communication. This document, which contains an English abstract, was submitted to the Office concurrently with the application on July 24, 2003. For the convenience of the Examiner, foreign patent document WO98/19105 is hereby resubmitted with copies of the date-stamped filing receipt and IDS paper filed therewith.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in

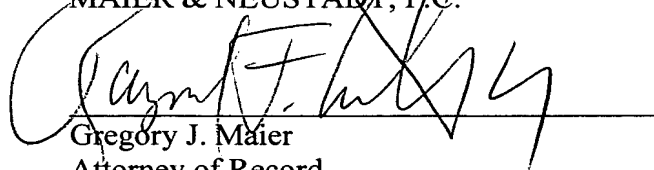
Application No. 10/625,652
Reply to Office Action of April 20, 2005

condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-13, 17, and 18 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

Raymond F. Cardillo, Jr.
Registration No. 40,440

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